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ABSTRACT

The state's strategy for stimulating constructive change is to help clarify objectives, develop analysis techniques, and stimulate self-renewal. Each of these elements is considered in some detail. The problem of clarifying goals and objectives involves three contexts: the content, the level of specificity, and the individuals or groups to whom it applies. Analysis and management includes the development of instruments to assess pupil achievement and to analyze productivity in any given situation in terms of the appropriate criteria for that situation. It also includes cost analyses which can be used in conjunction with the research and development projects and with analyses of the use of staff, facilities, pupils, methods, and time. The element of educational self-renewal requires 1) continuous evaluation of the appropriateness of established objectives, 2) continuous monitoring of the extent to which a program is achieving its objectives, and 3) continuous identification of alternative policies and practices for consideration. These strategies should result in the generation of alternative educational practices and a greater freedom for the personnel of district offices and local schools to experiment with the newly developed techniques and materials. (MBM)

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FLORIDA'S STRATEGY FOR STIMULATING CONSTRUCTIVE CHANGE AND SELF-RENEWAL IN EDUCATION*

A critical observer of the Florida Department of Education would recognize numerous changes which have taken place in the Department in the past few years. These changes have occurred in a variety of programs at different times. In many cases, changes were precipitated by recommendations or directives from top administrators in the Department, or by new legislation. In others, the changes result from initiative exercised by individual program administrators.

It is notable that changes have occurred on a broken front. That is, a change in approach might be implemented by an administrative unit in one Division, while an administrative unit in another Division having parallel responsibilities would not make a comparable change. This phenomenon has carried with it both advantages and disadvantages. It has allowed for a good deal of initiative and self-determination within individual administrative sections. Thus, changes have usually not occurred without a readiness on the part of involved Department personnel. However, the broken front approach has at times left observers in the field uncertain about the Department's stance on a variety of matters. This may have weakened the leadership potential of the Department in certain instances.

In spite of the fact that many changes within the Department have not been uniform in timing, there are several changes which have emerged to characterize a new posture for the Department. The following are examples:

a. In the administration of federal programs by the Department, the tasks of planning, management, and assessment are becoming increasingly important.

b. In the administration of state funds for education, the Department is expected to be able to analyze costs, as well as account for expenditures.

c. Educational consultants are expected to assume responsibilities for planning, for recommending priorities, and for supervising developmental activities, with a lesser emphasis on traditional services which they have been providing to school districts.

d. The research responsibilities of the Department have expanded beyond the traditional institutional research to include development and evaluation.

e. School accreditation standards have moved from exclusive reliance on input or status characteristics to a concern for educational process and products.

f. The leadership for developing school facilities in the Department has promoted broad involvement in facilities planning and has made available alternative types of school facilities.

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g. In teacher education, the movement is toward performance expectations for teachers as contrasted with requirements for certain kinds of experiences or exposure to certain courses.

These many changes are directed toward a greater emphasis on the individual learner and a concern for the learner's progress. The achievement of each individual learner represents the ultimate criterion for educational effectiveness. The various standards or practices which are supported or required by the Department of Education must be evaluated in terms of their effect on pupil learning, rather than on their contributions to the perpetuation of the current system of education.

Legal Bases for Changes

The legal bases for these changes can be found in a number of federal and state laws and regulations applying to specific programs or to programs in general. Rather than reviewing the many pertinent citations, it will suffice to trace recent state laws which change the role of the Department from an observer and chronicler of local educational programs in Florida to one of top-level management and stimulation of change.

From 1939 to 1968, the former role prevailed. The statutes directed the Department to "...examine the school plant, personnel, instruction, schools, methods of keeping accounts, records, and reports and other aspects of district school systems and educational institutions; to make recommendations to the authorities for needed changes and improvements; and to classify or accredit schools or services on the basis of standards and regulations prescribed by the State Board."

In 1968, the legislature enacted a statute which charged the Commissioner of Education to "...as rapidly as feasible expand the capability of the Department of Education in planning the state's strategy for effecting constructive educational change and providing and coordinating creative services necessary to achieve greater quality in education." The Commissioner was also charged to "...utilize all appropriate management tools, techniques, and practices which will cause the state's educational programs to be more effective and which will provide the greatest economies in the management and operation of the state's system of education." (Section 229.551, Florida Statutes)

In 1969, the legislature created the Florida Educational Research and Development Program, instructing the Department to sponsor "...the designing, development, testing, and evaluation on a pilot project basis of applied or action research or projects which seek information on questions of critical concern to present and future education needs of the State..." (Section 229.561, F.S.)

In the 1970 and 1971 legislative sessions, the emphasis was on assessment and accountability. The 1970 legislature directed the Commissioner of Education to develop uniform procedures for assessing the progress of students. More recently, "The Educational Accountability Act of 1971" was passed. This Act affirms and clarifies the responsibilities of the Commissioner of Education and local school districts to report on the effectiveness of public education in Florida. Such reporting will include information on pupil progress and and on the use of resources as it relates to such progress. (House Bill 894, 1970)

Essential Elements of the Emerging Strategy

The emerging state strategy for effecting constructive change and self-renewal in education has three major elements. These elements focus attention on the effects which the system has upon learners. The elements relate to establishing objectives, program management, and program renewal. They are as follows.

Objectives.--A necessary first step in improving education is to clarify goals and objectives; that is, to state objectives in a form which can be understood by learners, teachers, and policy-makers.

Analysis and management.--It is necessary to develop management systems which focus on the attainment of objectives, and then relate inputs and processes to the objectives, allowing for modification of processes and patterns of resources utilization as dictated by experience and insight, and enabling the educational system to be accountable for its use of resources.

Self-renewal.--Alternative methods or processes which can be employed for achieving educational objectives more efficiently are available; these should be identified, tested,and made accessible to stimulate program renewal in the schools in Florida.

The meaning and implications of these strategy elements are developed more thoroughly in the next three sections.

Clarifying Goals and Objectives

Clarity of goals and objectives is an essential element of any systematic effort for change. The lack of such clarity leads to programs which lack focus and to results which are difficult to interpret.

The problem of clarifying goals and objectives can be considered from at least three contexts: the content, the level of specificity, and the applicability (i.e., the individuals or groups to whom a goal or objective is applicable).

Content of Goals and Objectives

The content of a goal or objective can relate to an area of learning. That is, it can stipulate types of knowledge or skills which learners would be expected to achieve as a result of an educational program. A goal or objective can also relate to services or other functions which will be performed by an individual or organization. For example, "equalizing access to education" or "applying uniform accounting procedures" might be adopted as organizational goals. A hierarchical relationship between goals for learners and organizational goals is assumed, with goals or objectives for learners as the predominant consideration. Organizational goals are expected to facilitate the attainment of learning goals.

The goals for public school education in Florida (adopted by the State Board of Education on April 6, 1971) include both student learning goals and organizational goals. The student learning goals encompass the following areas: communication and learning skills, citizenship education, occupational interests, mental and physical health, home and family relationships, aesthetic and cultural appreciations, and human relations. The organizational goals include the following areas: development of instructional strategies, implementation of strategies, and evaluation.

Major attention is now being given to the clarification of goals and objectives for learners. These efforts are centered around the development of comprehensive catalogs of learning objectives. The catalogs of objectives will serve as reference guides to individual classroom teachers, to curriculum developers and evaluators in local school districts, and to persons at the state level with the responsibility for curriculum development and assessment. It should be recognized that the catalogs of objectives are being prepared as reference documents, not as prescriptions of total sets of objectives for each pupil. (The locus of responsibility for selecting goals is discussed later.)

Level of Specificity

The level of specificity is the second consideration in clarifying goals and objectives. The terms "goals" and "objectives" have come to signify different levels of specificity. In the field of education, the goal is normally a broad statement of general direction for an educational endeavor. An example (from the Goals for Public Education in Florida) is the following:

> Communication and learning skills. All students shall acquire to the extent of their individual physical, mental, and emotional capacities, a mastery of the basic skills required in obtaining and expressing ideas through the effective use of words, numbers, and other symbols.

The term "objective" signifies a level of greater specificity in describing the desired outcomes of an educational program. Normally, a goal will be broken down into several objectives.

Obviously, there are varying levels of specificity within the definitions of goals and objectives. Furthermore, the point of distinction between goals and objectives is arbitrary. The terms "behavioral objective" or "performance objective" have been used to describe objectives of a fairly precise level of specificity. The following is an example of a behavioral objective:

> Given a passage at his independent reading level, the learner will identify the "who", "what", and "when" in the passage by using a specified marking scheme.

A hierarchy of specificity in stating goals and objectives is illustrated in Figure 1. The point of utility in specificity depends upon the use to which the objectives are to be put. The catalogs of objectives which are being developed as resources in Florida are intended to encompass a full range of specificity. The degree of specificity desired for any purpose will be determined by individual users.

FIGURE 1

ILLUSTRATION OF A HIERARCHY OF SPECIFITY IN STATING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- The learner will master the comunication skills. (Parallel goals could relate to occupational skills, cultural appreciations, etc.)
- The learner will master the communication skill of reading. (Parallel goals could relate to speaking, listening, etc.)
- The learner will comprehend materials appropriate to his reading level. (Parallel goals could relate to decoding skills, vocabulary skills, etc.)
- The learner will master the skill of literal comprehension. (A parallel goal could relate to interpretation.)
- The learner will identify specific information in a given passage appropriate to his reading level. (Parallel objectives could relate to identifying other components of the sentence or passage.)
- Given a passage at his independent reading level, the learner will identify the "who", "what", and "when" in the passage by using a specified marking scheme. (Parallel objectives could relate to identifying other categories of information.)

In recent years, the State has encountered difficulties in obtaining specific statements of objectives applicable to individual classrooms. An initial strategy was to require classroom teachers to prepare behavioral objectives or performance objectives for the pupils in their classes. This activity was incorporated into the school accreditation process. It has since been determined that behavioral objectives might more appropriately be prepared by persons skilled in that activity and then made available in the form of a catalog from which teachers can select.

Determining the Applicability of Goals and Objectives

The State Board of Education is charged by law to "adopt comprehensive educational objectives for public education" (Section 229.053, Florida Statutes). Thus far, the Board has adopted general goals as listed earlier. The nature of these goals and the manner in which they are stated makes them applicable to all learners at all levels of education. As goals and objectives become more specific, the decision as to which groups or individuals they shall apply becomes more critical. The focus of responsibility for selecting objectives at varying degrees of specifity has not been definitively determined. The degree of discretion which should be exercised by the pupil, the parent, the teacher, the school, the school district, or the state is currently under consideration. The initial conclusion regarding the responsibility of the State seems to be as follows: The State Board of Education should adopt general goals (which it did on April 6, 1971). The

State Board should also adopt sets of minimum objectives, precisely stated, which should be achieved by virtually all pupils by specified times in their formal educational experience. Such a set of objectives will be adopted in the area of reading within the next few months. These objectives will form the basis for State assessment in reading.

Thus, it has been tentatively decided that the State should adopt broad general goals and should also adopt objectives in the basic skill areas representing essential minimums. The many types and levels of objectives remaining would be selected by the districts, schools, teachers, parents, or pupils.

The remaining objectives would be of varying types. They would include very specific objectives which all students in a sub-set of the population would be expected to master. A set of objectives of this type might be the basis for a curriculum in an occupational area. Each student would be expected to achieve the objectives, no matter how much time is required.

There will also be many objectives which are stated specifically and which various sub-sets of students will be expected to work toward, but which will be achieved with varying degrees of success by individual students. Advanced courses in most subjects and enrichment courses will have objectives of this type. In working toward these objectives, students will be provided equal opportunity for receiving instruction for a given period of time; at the conclusion of the time period, the extent to which each individual achieves the objectives depends upon his aptitude, his prior knowledge, and the diligence with which he pursued learning.

There are also many objectives which cannot practically be stated in terms of desired pupil learning. Instead, they must be described in terms of processes or procedures in which the learners should participate. Many people feel that certain school experiences should be provided with no pre-specified objectives other than those relating to the process which will be experienced.

Analyzing and Managing Educational Programs

Commissioner Floyd T. Christian, in his remarks to the Group 1 Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, March 24, 1971, made the following statement: "I have established as one of the major objectives of the Department of Education 'increasing the productivity of all public education programs.' In doing this, we plan to shift from a 'time oriented' to a 'performance oriented' public school system."

The Commissioner's statement is, of course, an affirmation of the statutory requirement to "utilize all appropriate modern management, tools, techniques, and practices which will cause the state educational program to be more effective and which will provide the greatest economies in the management and operation of the state's system of education." (Section 229.551, Florida Statutes)

Assessing Pupil Learning

The concept of a "performance oriented" public school system as proposed by the Commissioner requires explicit measures of performance for its implementation.

The performances to be measured must be related to the objectives of the system, as discussed in the preceding section. In implementing a strategy for educational change, it is necessary to have assessment instruments which measure the achievement of objectives established at the state, district, school, and classroom levels.

The fact that variations in objectives exist between school districts, between schools within districts, between classes within schools, and between pupils within classes places a special burden on any analysis system designed to measure the attainment of objectives. It makes uniform, standardized assessment procedures impractical, except for measuring the attainment of specific objectives established at the State level and possibly at the district level.

For this reason, the Department of Education is supporting the development of banks of assessment items, with each item correlated with a specific objective in one of the catalogs of objectives described earlier. With such item banks it is possible to tailor-make assessment instruments for each unique situation This is done by identifying those objectives which a given group of pupils, classrooms, schools, programs, etc., is attempting to achieve. Then, assessment instruments composed only of items for those objectives can be assembled.

With such an approach to assessment, it is possible to analyze productivity in any given situation in terms of the appropriate criteria for that situation. When comparing the productivity of two situations, it is necessary to ascertain the consistency of objectives (i.e., criteria) between the two situations. With the approach being taken in Florida, this is quite feasible, since the objectives for each situation will be selected from a comprehensive catalog which has in it the objectives (i.e., criteria) for each situation.

Cost Analysis

Obviously, it is not possible to make systematic plans for increasing productivity when the only available analytical information relates to products (i.e., attainment of objectives). It is also necessary to obtain information on costs. In fact, increased productivity has been defined in the Department as either (a) increasing pupil learning without increasing costs, (b) decreasing costs without decreasing pupil learning, or (c) increasing pupil learning with the increases in costs warranted by the overriding benefits of the increases in learning.

The problem of cost analysis is closely tied in with the issue of educational accountability. Accountability has been defined in the Department as the process of explaining the utilization of resources (i.e., cost) in terms of their contributions to desired objectives. To apply this concept, it is necessary to have available cost analysis techniques which make it possible to relate costs to the attainment of educational objectives. Such systems are currently under development in the Department of Education.

The costs analysis issue carries with it a special problem. While it is technically possible to provide cost analysis information on any type of unit breakdown which might be conceived, there is certainly a point of diminishing returns in applying detailed cost analysis techniques. In other words, the cost of highly detailed cost analysis may not always warrant the benefits which can be derived therefrom. For this reason, the Department's approach

to developing cost analysis techniques incorporates two systems. One is a uniform accounting system to be implemented statewide. This system, which will replace the present accounting system, will provide information in considerably more detail than has previously been available. It will also be expandable, allowing local school districts to collect additional information which is needed for their special purposes.

In addition to the basic accounting system, the Department is developing supplementary cost analysis procedures which can be applied uniformly to collect detailed cost information in any specified situation. This system will be applied when either the accounting system, a professional hunch, or a combination of the two, indicates that the pattern or level of costs in a given situation varies from what should reasonably be expected. The supplementary cost analysis system will also be used in conjunction with research and development projects designed to test alternative educational practices.

Analyzing the Utilization of Educational Resources

Once cost information on pupil learning is available, it is possible to make judgments regarding the productivity of an educational program. However, additional analyses may be necessary to determine how productivity might be increased. Such analyses would be concerned with the use of staff, facilities (space), pupils, methods, and time.

The productive use of resources is a key element of any organized educational program. The manner in which a classroom teacher uses available resources constitutes the art of teaching. Likewise, the productive use by principals, superintendents, and state education officials of resources which are potentially available constitutes the essence of educational management. An analysis of the use of educational resources is an analysis of the educational processes which are taking place.

It should be recognized that there is presently no absolute index of the productivity of resource utilization. While it is possible to compare cost per pupil or pupil achievement from one program to another, it is unlikely that it is possible to compare program effectiveness (i.e., the effectiveness of resource utilization) of two programs unless the objectives of both programs are identical.

The Department of Education is developing a system for assessing resource utilization. This system will be designed for use in conjunction with cost analysis information and information on pupil learning. It will be designed to help local school personnel in determining how to make effective use of the resources which they have available. It is unlikely that the system will produce any uniform pattern for optimum use of staff, materials, or facilities which could be applied statewide. Variations in learning objectives, staff capabilities, pupil aptitudes, and the complement of resources available would make this unlikely. Instead, the aim of the system is to make it possible for personnel in school districts and individual schools to analyze their use of resources and devise patterns which will lead to perceptible increases in productivity.

Educational Self-Renewal

The third major element in the State's strategy for effecting constructive educational change is to encourage self-renewal in the education system. Self-renewal is the process whereby an institution continually modifies its goals and objectives to meet the needs of its clients and continually modifies its program to facilitate the attainment of its objectives. Self-renewal requires (a) continuous evaluation of the appropriateness of established objectives, (b) continuous monitoring of the extent to which a program is achieving its objectives, and (c) continuous identification of alternative policies and practices for consideration. In short, self-renewal requires a focus on the goals which an institution should pursue, rather than on the institution as an end in itself.

The first two elements of the State's strategy described earlier--clarifying objectives and analyzing program effectiveness--relate to the first two requirements for self-renewal. However, self-renewal does not occur unless viable alternative are identified, tested, and implemented. The State's strategy for promoting self-renewal has two major parts: eliminating obstructions and encouraging innovation.

Eliminating Obstructions

Many persons have felt that the major barrier to innovation in education is the intricate web of detailed statutes and regulations perpetuated from the state level. To attack this problem, the Commissioner has appointed a task force to conduct a detailed analysis of statutes and regulations with the intent of giving school districts more flexibility and implementing the Department's strategy for constructive educational change as described herein. The work of the task force will result in recommendations to the State Board of Education and to the legislature.

In new legislation, a trend away from detailed specification of program requirements can already be seen. Instead of concentrating on specific educational practices, the legislature is encouraging educators to be accountable for the results which their programs achieve.

Much of the current regulation of educational practices comes from the manner in which funds are appropriated. A trend toward less restrictive fund allocation for elementary and secondary schools can be seen. For example, lesser portions of state funds are being appropriated in narrow categories of expenditures--such as textbooks, teacher salaries, or transportation. Increases in support are coming in categories such as "other current expenses" or "educational improvement expenses".

The ultimate results should be a situation in which educational managers at the district and school levels will have greater discretion in managing their resources. Rather than having their decisions dictated by State or district regulations, they will be expected to use their best professional judgment as to how resources should be deployed, and then be accountable for achieving productivity.

Encouraging Alternatives

Once the groundwork--the clarifying of objectives, the development of analysis techniques, and the elimination of legal barriers--is laid, the major element of the State's strategy for effecting constructive change in education will reside in the generation of alternative educational practices. The state will rely on the established R & D programs--ESEA Title III, Vocational Research, Educational Television, etc.--to demonstrate viable alternatives for increasing productivity of Florida's educational system. It is anticipated that in the future there will be greater coordination between these programs and greater visibility of the products or techniques which result.

It is also likely that a larger portion of unconventional alternative practices will be proposed, tested, and implemented in the future. The present dual problem of rising costs of education and rising expectations of the educational system are placing extreme pressures on those responsible for conducting educational programs. Many persons feel that the present model will not be adequate for education in the future. However, there are others who believe adamantly that the present model for public education should not be discarded until viable alternatives have been successfully demonstrated. Hence, there is both internal and external pressure on educational innovators to produce alternative approaches for organizing and administering instruction.

The role of dedicated and creative professionals at the local school and school district should not be overlooked. This is certainly the backbone of the State's strategy for effecting constructive change. It would not be possible or desirable for the State to produce a master set of classroom procedures and school operational procedures which should be applied uniformly throughout the State.

Instead, the State's strategy, as has been described herein, is to help clarify objectives, to develop analysis techniques, and to stimulate self-renewal. The actual operation of educational programs will remain in the hands of personnel in the district offices and local schools. The State is attempting to develop techniques and materials to aid those at the local level. However, it is only through the creative application of new techniques and materials and through effective communication between the many persons who are dedicated to improving education that constructive educational change can actually take place. The State cannot change education without the help of the educators--the teachers, pupils, parents, supervisors, and administrators--of Florida.